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## **The 9/11 Decade Media Discourse: Content Analysis on Correspondents' Reports in *Al Jazeera* Online**

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### **Abstract**

Adopting the theory of second level agenda-setting, this study interprets the main themes in 18 articles extracted from a special report on the 9/11 Decade in *Al Jazeera* online. The main aim of this study is to acknowledge that media agenda-setting theory is applicable to the contents in the Correspondents' Reports articles from *Al Jazeera* online regarding the post 9/11 decade. It also aims to raise awareness that the discourse of Terrorism Alertness and Fear themes are frequently used in these articles. Qualitative media content analysis is conducted and themes are analyzed to investigate the most frequent themes used under the topic and affective attributes category within the articles,

collectively. The two objectives of this study are a) to determine the most frequent theme used collectively in the category of topic of post 9/11 decade articles in *Al Jazeera* online; and b) to investigate the most frequent theme used collectively in the affective attributes category of post 9/11 decade articles in *Al Jazeera* online. Each article is analyzed through five categories of themes, which are Terrorism Alertness, Political Allegiance, Justification of Iraq War, Fear, and Hope. Phrases that are associated with the themes are extracted and structured in tables. Results are then discussed according to the objectives of the study, based on past literature and the authors' interpretations. Results show that the most frequently used theme under the category of topic is Terrorism Alertness, which was used 44 times. Meanwhile Fear, which was used 64 times, is the most frequently used theme under the affective attributes category. This study is highly significant for the media, society, policy makers, as well as the realization of fourth generation warfare. A knowledgeable society could make use of media content for better understanding of an issue, while the media could use it to more effectively shape public opinion. In the context of media and information warfare studies, this study is significant in acknowledging the fourth generation warfare and realizing the contradictory aspects of war and peace journalism, in that even a decade after the 9/11 attacks there is still a war for freedom from terrorism and fear for the society, and recognition that media is an instrument of warfare.

**Keywords:** *9/11, Al Jazeera, online news media, second level agenda-setting, qualitative media content analysis, fourth generation warfare.*

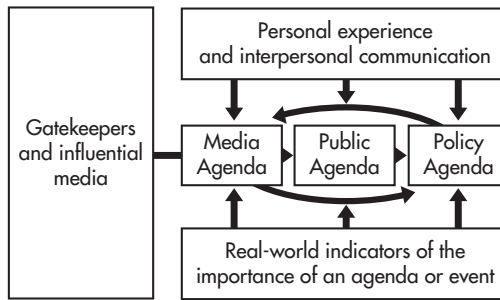
## **1.0 Introduction**

The 9/11 attacks are defined by the news media and popular culture as a violation on American culture, if not civilization itself [1]. Fourth generation warfare has been recognized after the attacks of 9/11 in 2001, in which terrorism strategically focuses on changing the minds of decision makers, involving transnational, national, and subnational organizations and networks [2]. Most importantly, fourth generation warfare operationally uses different

messages for different audiences and as a result, terrorism is a main discourse in creating fear in the mass media. It has been more than a decade since the attacks of 9/11 made history and still 9/11 gains media attention from people across the globe. For example, the media frequently shows President Bush's statement on the 'threat' even more than seven years after the attacks, as well as associating the attacks in the Mumbai bombings in 2008 with 9/11. This spectacle is called media agenda-setting, where the media tells audiences that it is very important to think about 9/11 even though it has been over for more than a decade. The mass media provide a background of culture that consists of various parts, including divergent stories that resonate with dominant narratives and themes. [3] finds that public opinion polls have shown that media audiences are influenced by news media reports about 9/11, together with interpretations of the causes, the culprits, and support for military actions by the United States. Therefore, social meanings are constructed through news reports by associating these themes with public discourse [3].

Since information seekers are depending increasingly on online news media, it is pertinent to analyse the contents of this media in the context of 9/11 a decade after the attacks. Thematic content analysis, in line with second level agenda setting theory, helps us to understand the 'how' before the 'what'. Therefore, this study focuses on how the media uses 9/11 rather than the implications followed once the articles are published. Themes are categorised in articles extracted from Al Jazeera online website regarding the issue.

After the attacks on September 11, 2001, the absence of the twin towers represented a metaphor for the unthinkable „ for what Americans thought would not happen, happened in such a horrifying manner. 9/11, as described by [4], is an event that is both 'historical' and 'historic' – 'historical' in the logic of space and time, and most interestingly, 'historic' in the sense of its importance across space and time. Not only do the attacks affect the hearts, minds and memories of Americans, but also of the people around the world. As a result to the attacks, many survivors are cautious of terrorism, financial ruin, as well as being psychologically traumatized by the events that affected their lives and relationships [5].



*Figure 1: Components of the Agenda-Setting Process (Rogers and Dearing, 1988)*

Since the attacks, media coverage of 9/11 flourished, and discourses of its content, whether true or not, have come under public scrutiny. As [4] narrates, 9/11 has become a universal ‘sign’ to which people all across the globe can refer to describe in every part of future events, especially when it involves terrorist attacks. For instance, the famous ‘26/11’ Mumbai attacks in 2008 are repeatedly reported by the media as India’s 9/11. Thus, the significance of 9/11 in the media setting is apparent on a global scale.

This is where propaganda plays a role. [6] contends that the media uses deception and therefore manipulates the public’s hearts and minds. With reference to the 9/11 context, [7] finds that politicians use the mass media by projecting symbols and icons associating terrorism with Iraq, Islam, and other non-western nations to encourage fear in order to obtain goals such as internal social control. Therefore, in spite of media discourse of the events, 9/11 not only has impacted the physical lives of the public, but also eventually influences the public’s opinions and emotions, as well policy-makers’ decisions. These implications occur through the process of agenda-setting by the media, as described in Figure 1.

As far as media and information warfare is concerned, media agenda-setting has a big part to play. The media sets the agenda on the importance of the events of 9/11 for its audiences around the world to assist in accomplishing organizations’ or governments’ objectives. According to [8], one of the main objectives of warfare is to gain public opinion. Previous literature has indicated that the media needs to be guided through assigning importance to issues

and events for new issues. In the case of 9/11, the media was assigned by organizations to draw attention to the importance of the event in order to gain support for new ideas, emotions, policies and regulations. Thus, media agenda-setting has its tools to obtain the organizations' objectives, and the use of themes in its content is apparent in disseminating the importance of the issue.

The significance of choosing *Al Jazeera* Online in this study is due to the organization's values. *Al Jazeera* has nurtured a more independent role for the media through supporting the renunciation of government controls on the press [9]. It has also been acknowledged for its straightforward, independent style of journalism, as well as for providing accuracy, balance and Arab perspectives on news and issues. Furthermore, [10] assert that *Al Jazeera* is not just a news network or the 'CNN of the Arab World', but also a phenomenon that has affected the culture and politics of the Arab region.

Competitive pressures from new media and rapidly evolving technology have allowed network news organizations to adapt to the fact that more and more audiences are now depending mainly on the Internet for news [11]. Therefore, in order to globalize the network and reach English users across the globe, *Al Jazeera* officially launched its English-language news site on September 1, 2003, two years after it launched its Arabic news site [9]. *Al Jazeera* online has been a very important source of news regarding the conflicts between the United States and the Arab world. Online news media regarding the events of 9/11 have been researched and [4], for example, found that online representations of 9/11 prompt the audience to take part in recollecting, archiving, and mourning the loss that occurred during the event.

More than 10 years have passed since the attacks, and previous research has studied numerous differences and similarities of media setting and in different scales, framing within the decade. Therefore, for the present study, 10 years after the attacks, articles from *Al Jazeera* online were extracted according to themes that highlight the importance of the 9/11 effects. There is a special report page on "The 9/11 Decade" in the website dedicated to discussion of the events of 9/11 in the decade after the attacks. In this study, 18 articles are extracted from the Correspondents' Reposts section of the page. These articles

are relevant because they are reported by *Al Jazeera's* own journalists, and hence represent the organization's views and values of the event. Furthermore, many of *Al Jazeera's* news professionals, who are trained in the western journalistic tradition, cover the events in the website [9]. The discourse of Terrorism Alertness, Political Allegiance, Justification of Iraq War, Fear, and Hope are the themes that are contained in these articles. The most frequent themes are investigated and analysed in this study in order to understand how *Al Jazeera* online sets the agenda for the post 9/11 decade.

### *1.1 Problem Statement*

After the 9/11 attacks in 2001, President George W. Bush declared the 'War on Terror', and ever since, as [9] point out, the United States has engaged in a long term conflict with Al Qaeda, and with individuals, organizations and groups that may be associated with it. The 'War on Terror' happens to be a major headline in news discourse throughout the decade. Pertaining to that matter, [9] also assert that one of the media that has closely reported the conflict between the United States and Al Qaeda is the *Al Jazeera* network, hence the issue of 9/11 remains prominent. In a perfect world, 9/11 would be used by the media merely to provide information regarding terrorism and security, as well as to promote hope and justice for the people involved.

However, previous studies confirm that after the attacks, the media played a significant role in spreading terrorism and fear among the audience. The media is one of the entities that are responsible in setting the agenda of 9/11, for its influence of how audiences understand or interpret the issue. In relation to that, [12] asserts that the expanding use of fear is closely linked to terrorism and crime, and also states that there is a rise of news reports associating terrorism with victims and fear. In the case of the Iraq War, *Al Jazeera* online attracted more than a million online visitors in the month of March 2003 [9]. Sociologists have observed that media audiences have become 'armoured' and that society lives behind walls, hiring guards, and carrying handguns [3]. However, there is limited research that specifically applies the second level agenda setting theory regarding the post 9/11 decade in online media discourse setting.

The discourse of terrorism and fear has produced a sense of disorder and a view that 'things are out of control'. Moral panic is suggested as one of the consequences of not being aware of media content messages regarding 9/11 [3]. [13] asserts that higher levels of terrorism risks are contained in articles that initiate a military response, source selection, and media portrayals of the risk. [14] states that even though experiences actually differ from the messages media is portraying, the bias in messages about wars in the Middle East encourages the public to stereotype them with 'Muslimness', hence having implications for the social aspect as well. Thus, it is logical that media content should be analysed in order for audiences to understand the politics of the discourse on 9/11 to avoid disinformation and the reinforcement of the stated consequences.

The main problem is the lack of awareness of how the media instil and portray ideas on what is important to think about when it comes to the issue of 9/11. This study focuses on how 9/11 is used by the media, a decade after the attacks, through a study of *Al Jazeera* online contents, incorporating second level media agenda-setting theory to provide such awareness. Thus, media content analysis on this issue helps to show how influential online media such as *Al Jazeera* covers 9/11 a decade after the attacks through identifying the most prominent themes under the second level agenda setting-theory.

### *1.2 Media Agenda-Setting Theory*

Agenda-setting of the media specifies that through repetition of news coverage, the media is able to cultivate the importance of an issue in the public's mind [15].

A new level of this theory, called second level agenda-setting, explains that an agenda is an abstract idea and that not only issues could listed according to importance, but attributes and sub issues as well. It is used to deal with the presentation of variables that affects how the issues are presented in the media. This second level is used as a basis for the analysis in this study. As described by [16], there are four major dimensions of this theory, which are:

1. The topic of the news item, which refers to what is included in the content



2. Presentation, which refers to the size and placement of the content
3. Cognitive attributes, which refers to the details of the content, and
4. Affective attributes, which refers to the tone of the content.

The presentation dimension and cognitive attributes dimension are not relevant to the objectives of the present study, because the placement and size of the articles are fixed in the scope of study. Additionally, second level agenda-setting differs from media framing, in that the former's main cognitive attribute is accessibility. Since the articles are extracted from an online news media which is generally accessible, this aspect does not need to be analysed. Therefore, pertaining to the study topic, the contents of the articles are analysed using the remaining two dimensions as categories, which are the topic of the articles, and affective attributes, respectively. Themes are then placed under these categories that can be applied to the articles. The theoretical framework of the paper is illustrated in Figure 2.

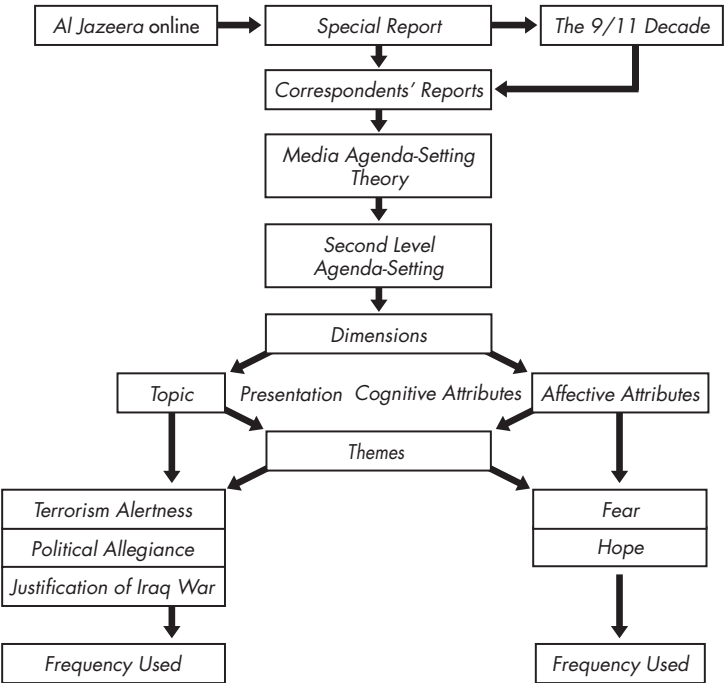


Figure 2: Theoretical Framework

## **2.0 Review of Literature**

### *2.1 9/11, The War on Terror, and the Media*

#### *2.1.1 Media Content within the Decade after the 9/11 Attacks*

The media assists audiences in simplifying things and issues into categorizing dichotomies of good, bad, right, wrong, familiar, proper, or strange [3]. Media content after 9/11 includes elements that spread the topic of terrorism's affective attributes in order to convey its importance to audiences. [17] implies that media were used by the Bush administration to disseminate fear and sentiments among the public to rally support for an imperialist war, and he also finds that the media failed to represent political differences with regard to the Iraq war.

#### *2.1.2 Media Roles and Content*

The progress of the passive and active roles of the media has been reported in previous literature. In earlier times, media was considered merely as a neutral channel, nothing more than a conduit for the flow of information connecting senders to receivers [18]. This mass media model suggests that while it is in the communication channel, nothing significant happens to the message. As supported by the null effects model of Young (1981) [19], the media plays a passive role, portraying reality with little or no changes or modifications in the content.

However, more recently, scholars rejected the passive role of mass media as unacceptable and obsolete. Shoemaker and Reese (1996), for example, argue that the manipulation of media content is vital during relocation and reproduction of news of events. [6] goes further, arguing that the media uses deception and hence, public discourses manipulate the public's hearts and minds. In addition to that [6], also finds that political decisions affecting the majority are made without public input and knowledge. Therefore, current research deems that the media has an active role in shaping the attitudes of society.

Media can also use their power in policy-making decisions, as [20] suggests that media can encourage conflict resolution, shifts in the conduct of

conflicts, as well as decrease the negative effects that are normally associated with humanitarian efforts. Although this article triggers the idea that the media has a role in promoting peace, media also has the capability of provoking conflicts. According to [21], the Iraq War in 2003 was a global event that was distinctively constructed by the media across the globe. Moreover, the role of media in inciting conflict can also be supported by the research findings of [22]. They find that the relationships between exposure to terrorism-related news and the perceived risk of terrorism to self and fear for others are associated positively with each other. Although media audiences worry for others, results on the perceived risk of terrorism for self proved otherwise, which suggests that media audiences do not see themselves at risk of terrorism, which raises the idea of 'hope' among media audiences.

The media also play a role in not disseminating the truth, according to [23], who believe that there is underreporting of the actual number of terrorism incidents, indicating that the true level of global terrorist activity is underestimated in the databases used by applied researchers. The study also found that underreporting of terrorism is strongly concentrated in nations that do not practice press freedom and democracy.

In a more local context of media roles, [24] touches on the relationship between Islamic values and journalistic values in Muslim countries. His study suggests that press freedom is not compatible with the majority of Muslim countries compared to the west; however Muslim journalists in Indonesia and Malaysia practice journalism in accordance with Islamic values.

In addition, local media have also contributed in disseminating the importance of the 9/11 events after a decade. [25] writes that the issue of 9/11 has become a benchmark for Islamophobia, even a decade after the attacks. Moreover, [26] refers to a survey result that finds that the Muslim and Western publics continue to perceive a mainly negative relationship between them, and that both sides have negatively stereotyped each other after 9/11.

### *2.1.3 Propaganda on Terrorism*

Terrorism is one of the main issues of importance portrayed in the media after the 9/11 attacks. Terrorism in the attacks of 9/11 has enabled political

actors to expand the definition of the situation to portray Americans as victims [3]. The repeated images and articles describing the Twin Towers provide an icon that reminds audiences that terrorism is a perpetual enemy throughout the globe. [3] explains that the terrorism matrix is included through online media. Ever since the 9/11 attacks, online media has reflected the changes of audiences' daily lives due to the attacks. Terrorism is also reflected in disclaimers within the content of online media, such as 'since 9/11...', and 'how the world has changed', and 'terrorism world' is domesticated by an international order, that a 'new world' is governed by evil terrorists rather than politics [3]. Pertaining to that, terrorism in the media has sparked the notion of good and evil, and terrorism is portrayed as an evil to be feared and as a threat to civilization, or 'good'.

Additionally, in spreading the truth of war, [27] theorizes on the basis of Vietnam War as an example, that the general pictorial coverage of US wars by its media does not illustrate the authenticities of war. Nonetheless, the repetitive exposure of the War on Terror continues, as [28] conclude that the news discourse on the War on Terror is still trending even though not as dominant as it was in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attack.

#### *2.1.4 Implications of the War on Terror and Media Content on 9/11*

[29] explains that the War on Terror has resulted in the loss of thousands of lives in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Afghan-Pakistan border, and it has been estimated that at least 3.7 trillion US dollars have been poured into both wars. [29] further points out that the obsession with terrorism has made illegal incarcerations, torture, and assassinations acceptable in the name of War on Terror. He also notes that terrorism is often linked with Islam, hence the War on Terror also spawns Islamophobic sentiments. [30] judges that the initial coverage of US military triumph in the media has turned negatively towards the chaos it caused, hence damaging the logic of the Bush administration's invasion in Iraq. This may be due to the transformation of methods of media reporting, especially on propaganda, as [31] asserts that media such as tabloid journalism with its lack of objectivity, influenced news reporting during the Iraq War, resembling the entertainment model of 'reality shows'.

[32] asserts that some young people are discouraged from participating in the political public sphere due to news coverage on anti-war protests. On a larger scale, war journalism has dominated the style of media coverage on contemporary conflicts and thus has tended to foster international frictions between global politics [33]. Setting aside the political sphere, the War on Terrorism implicates the preparedness of citizens toward possible terrorism attacks. According to a survey result by [34], in regard to preparedness concerning terrorism, respondents in cities such as New York City and Washington DC, men, and high-income respondents engage in preparedness activities, while African American and Hispanics, and low-income respondents engage in avoidance activities.

Other than that, media treatment also has implications for fear and other attitudes. [35] indicate quantitatively that marital quality, community resilience, life satisfaction, and stress among significant others are affected by the proximity to the threat of war. Qualitatively, their study analyses the role of social variables in personal reaction to stress levels. and therefore, this article focuses on the implications toward social variables and stress.

[13] states that Islam is still generally likely to be linked to fearsome accounts of terrorist threats. As [14] notes, although the messages portrayed by the media do not represent truthful experiences of Islamic society, the public tend to stereotype them with 'Muslimness' due to the biased nature of messages about wars in the Middle East, with implications for the social context as well. Pertaining to that, [36] finds that the discourse of negatively stereotyping Islam and discrimination against Muslims affects intercultural communication, peace and human rights journalism, and terrorism prevention. This result relates to [14] findings, as subsequent implications of stereotyping Muslims. In a geographically more proximate context, social implications are discovered as well. [37] discovered that after the 9/11 attacks, Muslims in Singapore were advised not to feel sensitive and non-Muslims were advised not to discriminate against them.

[38] also warns that the War on Terror creates a 'global risk society'. He argues that better recognition of this could transform possible dangers arising from it into the creation of better regional structures of support between

multination states. This highlights the point that 9/11 is seen as encouraging global responsibility in fighting terrorism.

Implications for rhetoric and security are also found. It concludes that network-centric warfare is one of the strategies in the notion that any problem regarding security is a hyperbole for 'The Terror'. On the other hand, there are also implications in terms of perception toward the US. [39] finds that the US media propaganda successfully projects a good image within the nation; however it fails to do the same outside the US. Furthermore, [40] signifies that many people outside the US see their own nation as an enemy because the nation fails to perceive herself as others see her, and that the nation does not agree with others. Underreporting of terrorism as explained by [23], significantly implicate the issues of national security because of the lack of constructing indices of terrorism risk and the competent implementation of counterterrorism measures.

## *2.2 Agenda-Setting by the Media*

### *2.2.1 The Outlines of Media Agenda-Setting*

The all-purpose core of media agenda-setting is that it creates public awareness and interests on prominent issues which leads to the audience perceiving that those issues are of higher importance compared to others. One of the noticeable effects of media agenda-setting is that the global news media are prone to boosting existing attitudes and stereotypes of cultural 'others' [33].

In [18] study of the agenda-setting roles of mass media, he states the public has a collective need for orientation and thus the media agenda influences the public agenda. Since the present study analyses reports from Al Jazeera's own journalists, it is further justified in the context of the theory that journalists representing a media organization affect media content through various factors, such as their professional roles and ethics, beliefs, and personal attitudes on a subject. Furthermore, in agreement with modern researchers on media agenda-setting theory, [18] also deems that a symbolic environment is created in news media content by emphasizing through more time and prominence being allocated to certain events, people or group of people than others.

According to [41], agenda-setting theory has evolved from first level to second level in the discovery of group conditions due to how the first level is operated, such as mentioned previously by [18], the need for orientation and obtrusiveness of issues.

[42] explain that the second level of agenda setting focuses on examining the impact of attribute salience, or the properties, qualities, and characteristics that portray objects or people in the news and the tone of those attributes. The attributes of second-level agenda setting can be divided into two dimensions; substantive, which concern personality or ideology of an issue; and affective, which concern the emotional qualities and the tone of the substantive attributes, whether positive, neutral, or negative [41]. This theory relates to the present study's theoretical framework in analysing themes that are embedded in the unit of analysis.

### *2.2.2 Agenda-setting on 9/11 and the War on Terror*

Results in [8] study show that the United States government and media agenda worked on issues regarding the effects of 9/11 (terrorism, weapons of mass destruction in Iraq) during the stage of high public support, and not otherwise. This means that timing is important in the application of media agenda-setting in order to influence public opinion on an issue.

As previously mentioned, [4] has suitably acknowledged 9/11 as a 'sign' that is recognizable by audiences to associate with events of terror, such as the media reference of 'India's 9/11' in describing the Mumbai attacks in 2008. The author also points out that the media uses "9/11" in the same way as "Holocaust" is – to be remembered and referred to.

9/11 is covered through various media across the globe. In Europe, for example, the British newspaper The Guardian mostly covered 9/11 through an expressive journalistic style, highlighting emotional responses of fear, horror and outrage; and after the London bombings, terrorism has been framed slanting more towards Islamic fundamentalism [43]. In comparing the British newspapers The Guardian and The Times and the Irish newspaper the Irish Times, [44] found that long established as they are, they continue to spread

political ideologies whereby the The Guardian is left-wing, the The Times is right-wing, and the Irish Times leaning more towards left in the case of 9/11.

Comparisons of 9/11 content have also been carried out between US media and other nations' media. Research by [45] studied the differences on the news framing approaches regarding terrorism and terrorism-related events and found that US newspapers use episodic coverage, presenting news associated with a military approach, while UK newspapers use thematic coverage, oriented with diplomatic evaluations of the mentioned events. [46] find that the war coverage regarding Iraq War is significantly different in the sense that US newspapers cover the military framework and rely heavily on official sources from the military and government, while Swedish newspapers cover the responsibility and anti-war protest framework with negative reporting on the war.

This is considered media agenda setting, where contents are thematically aligned for a certain purpose. For example, [13] affirms that higher levels of terrorism risks are contained in articles that initiate military response, source selection, and media portrayals of the risk.

This leads to different perspectives on the interpretation by the media of an issue to create the agenda. [47] interpret that in the context of Jihad as a culture, the theme projected by the media is that the west is perceived as permanent aggressor and that Muslims are religiously mistreated. Another example is that while the United States media frame the Iraq War as 'Operation Iraqi Freedom' or 'War in Iraq,' a more negative tagline 'War on Iraq,' is used on Canadian broadcast network, and numerous Arab media presented it as an 'invasion' and 'occupation' [21].

[48] confirms the fact that the selection of newsworthy sources is influenced by national interest, such as the case of media agenda on 9/11. Moreover, national interest outlines the range of sources quoted on newspapers' pages according to the country of origin, whereby greater newsworthiness of a foreign nation's sources is assigned when the interest of the publication's home nation is keener.



### *2.2.3 The Discourse of Fear in the Media after 9/11*

A study by [12] asserts that the expanding use of fear is closely linked to terrorism and crime, and also states that there has been an increase of news reports associating terrorism with victims and fear. He explains that the discourse of fear is greatly produced and linked with terrorism and crime, and that criminal victimization has contributed to the cultural politics of fear. The extensive use of fear in the mass media can be defined as the pervasive communication, symbolic awareness, and expectation that danger and risk are the prime focus of the effective environment, or the physical and symbolic environment as people define and experience it in a daily basis. [3] argues that the emergence of the politics of fear and policy makers' promotion and use of audience beliefs and assumptions about danger, risk, and fear are enhanced through associating terrorism coverage with the discourse of fear in order to achieve certain goals of the government.

[3] finds that the news reports stress fear of terrorism through highlighting communal suffering, opportunities to participate helping survivors and defeating terrorism. He also suggests that fear is strongly associated with topics upon repetition, and that it becomes closely connected with the topic so that fear is no longer stated but implied in news discourse.

[3] also notes that the discourse of fear is similar to propaganda: it is repetitively mentioned in news media by stereotyping outside 'threats' and exclusively suspect and 'evil others'. The constant use of the fear theme encompasses crises and normal times (such as the timeline of the present study – the decade after 9/11) that it influences every part of everyday life including mundane and significant events.

## *2.3 Online News Media Content and 9/11*

### *2.3.1 Online News Media*

News format and content has evolved with developments in technology. [3] explains that the greatest changes in news content in recent years are in the speed and rhythm of news. Due to the Internet, online media has become the most important digital news source and format for information. Thus, it is now

safe to say that online newspapers have become an established feature in the media landscape. Previous studies have analysed the comparative benefits of learning political knowledge through online and traditional news consumption. Some scholars, according to [49], find that a high probability of incidental news knowledge is influenced due to the exposure of general Internet usage and therefore may lead to a greater awareness on subjects regarding public affairs.

### *2.3.2 Al Jazeera and the 9/11-Effect*

Since the technology was introduced in 1991, the World Wide Web has advanced rapidly and Al Jazeera is one of the transnational networks that utilize this technology to its advantage. Online news media is a platform for globalization. Globalization believers agree that news is becoming homogenized on a worldwide scale [48]. [9] confirm from past literature that online news reports resemble their traditional counterparts in agreeing with the norms that are customarily applied in every government and culture. For example, [50] examines how CNN and Al-Jazeera news sites covered stories on the Iraqi civilian casualties during the Iraq War. Results reveal that both news outlets spread propagandist messages.

[51] also explains that Al Jazeera has utilized the Internet technology to distribute the gathered information regarding wars in Iraq and Gaza. Therefore, Al Jazeera has disseminated information through war journalism, which in this study mentions the Iraq War, through the Internet.

Furthermore, [9] indicate that Al Jazeera covers the Afghan War by emphasizing the human toll and personal sufferings. [33] discovered that extended viewing of Al Jazeera's English channel leads to less rigidity in thinking, hence making viewers more flexible to contemplate alternative and clashing perspectives. The authors also found that the news approach of Al Jazeera English differs significantly from other major news organizations, such as CNN International and BBC World, because its agenda accentuates the issues of certain importance to people living abroad (from the west).

Since the attacks of 9/11, anti-American sentiments especially from the Arab public have flourished. [51] affirm that Al Jazeera plays a role in driving

negative public opinion towards the Americans due to its negative coverage of the United States, characterizing it as a ‘powerful and uniform media effect’. However, [9] found that the majority of news shown on the Al-Jazeera network is sourced from the US and its allies, and that its online website includes negative perceptions towards terrorism and a lack of different perspectives regarding the matter. Still, according to [52], the Global War on Terror does not influence independent foreign news agenda, which suggests that the implied risks to independent foreign news agenda are unproven.

#### *2.4 Discussion on the Literature Review*

The media portray 9/11-related images such as terrorism, Iraq, Islam, and other non-western nations in association with crime in order to spread sentiments, and support towards the War on Terror and, consequently, the Iraq War. The perspective of Jihadist media on the other hand, according to [47], associates westerners as permanent aggressors and Muslims as religiously mistreated. The portrayals of the 9/11 topic in the media relate to this study in the themes selected, specifically Terrorism Alertness and Justification of the Iraq War.

Media play a role in both potentially inciting conflicts, as well as promoting peace. The media does not entirely inform the truth, nor is it objective. For example, American media propagates 9/11 and the War on Terror with contents that are related to military and security, thus spreading fear. This supports the use of the theme Fear in this study. Furthermore, previous research has extensively discussed the politics of fear in the news discourse of 9/11, providing further support for the theme.

Understanding the theory and practicality of media agenda-setting is vital in the context of this study. The subjectivity of interpretations regarding 9/11 events are discovered, yet it is still considered important to remember it. How 9/11 is claimed to be both ‘historic’ and ‘historical’ suits the main idea of this study, for it highlights the significance of 9/11 in spite of its time and place. One of the most consistent findings from the mentioned studies in the literature review section is the major role played by journalists’ of media organizations in focusing, reproducing and shaping issues that gradually lead to the public’s perception of the issues.

Although the findings of the literature reviewed are relatively satisfactory in providing general information related to the study, nevertheless, there are also limitations in the literature related to the contents of Al Jazeera online. Previous studies have revealed the lack of objectivity in Al Jazeera, although there are some claims to the contrary. Although at the outset, the authors expected to find more defined research on Al Jazeera's news coverage of 9/11, the existing studies nevertheless create a balanced perspective of the organization. Moreover, the acceptance level of Al Jazeera from past reviews favours the study's justification in selecting Al Jazeera as a suitable media organization to carry out an analysis of contents related to the post 9/11 decade.

The most significant literature with implications for the present study is the work carried out by [3], which explains how news reports have strengthened the link between terrorism and fear, and that a critical symbol in the politics of fear is victim and victimization. Therefore, the findings of the literature reviewed do meet the expected outcomes of the study. Although the literature lacks any in-depth study of Al Jazeera online news content, this section nevertheless represents a valuable supplementary guide to knowledge on the topic of study.

### **3.0 Methodology**

#### *3.1 Research Procedures*

The research procedure for this study follows the qualitative research guidelines for document analysis provided by [53].

##### *3.1.1 Problem and Unit of Analysis Determination*

The first step of the procedure is to determine the specific problem to be investigated. The basic problem of this study is "how does online media set the agenda for 9/11 after 10 years?" Literature relating to the topic of study is gathered and reviewed. After becoming familiar with the process and context of the literature, articles that are relevant to the topic are identified. According to the problem, a unit of analysis is selected. In this study, the unit of analysis is a set of 18 articles.

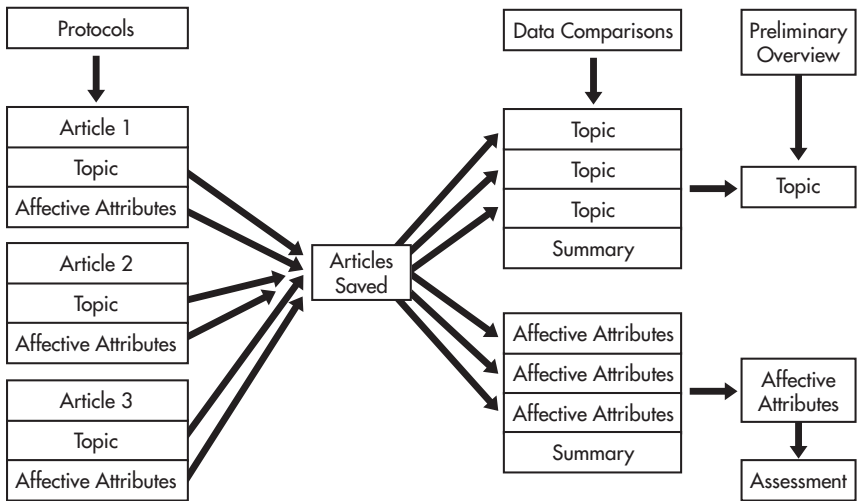


Figure 3: Protocol Construct

### 3.1.2 Protocol Construction

The second step of the procedure is to identify and list categories in order to guide data collection. Thus, a protocol is drafted. A protocol is a list used in guiding the process of data collection, which consists of questions, items, categories, or variables from documents [53]. Articles are gathered to detect categories based on second level agenda-setting theory. Once the themes are identified, the articles are saved. Different articles associated with each category are grouped and summarized for data comparison. Then, the summary for each category is reviewed for assessment, and thus data collection is completed. The protocol is regularly tested, revised and refined until it is in line with the study topic and methodology. The revised protocol is then used for the study. The construct of the revised protocol is as illustrated in Figure 3.

### 3.1.3 Themes Identification

The third step of the procedure starts once the researcher has determined the sampling rationale and strategy. The articles, together with the categories are reviewed to identify themes. Themes are the repeated distinctive notions that appear in a many articles [53]. As previously mentioned in the Theory Used section, this study covers two categories under the second level agenda-

setting theory, which are topic and affective attributes, respectively. Themes are identified under both categories. Therefore, for the topic category (Category A), the themes are Terrorism Alertness, (Theme A1), Political Allegiance (Theme A2), and Justification of Iraq War (Theme A3). For the affective attributes category (Category B), the themes are Fear (Theme B1), and Hope (Theme B2). Therefore, the unit of analysis of the study is the set of articles studied using these themes.

### *3.1.4 Data Collection*

The fourth step of the procedure is data collection. The presentation of the data involves tables and texts. The type of data is narrative in form. The data is collected by using pre-set codes (a coding sheet) with descriptive examples. It is also important to note that during this process, data analysis is also performed to extract relevant phrases according to the themes. The standard coding sheet was formatted based on Altheide's Research Team Protocol for Studying News Reports about Fear [53], because of the similarity in the topic of that study and the present study. Adjustments were made as necessary to meet the needs of the present study.

### *3.1.5 Data Analysis*

The final step of the procedure is data analysis. However, data analysis was also carried out simultaneously during data collection process. This is due to the fact that it was necessary to investigate phrases that relevant to the themes in each article. In this study, the results are presented in tables, and show the frequency of themes in each article. However, much of the data analysis is in the form of text. Pertaining to the study's objectives, the 'extremes' and 'key differences' within themes are compared and contrasted by referring to the data in the tables.

## **4.0 Findings**

In the topic category, results show that the most frequently used theme is Terrorism Alertness, followed by Political Allegiance, and then Justification of the Iraq War, while in the affective attributes category, the most frequently used theme is Fear, followed by Hope.

Table 1, shows the frequency of themes used in articles, clearly display the overall impression of the study's outcomes.

**TABLE 1**

The Frequency of Themes Used in Articles

Article No.	Category A			Category B	
	Theme A1	Theme A2	Theme A3	Theme B1	Theme B2
1	4	6	0	6	3
2	2	3	0	2	1
3	6	0	0	2	1
4	1	0	1	2	2
5	2	9	3	2	2
6	1	0	8	4	0
7	4	0	0	3	2
8	2	0	0	4	2
9	0	0	1	2	2
10	0	0	0	4	3
11	4	0	0	6	3
12	0	1	0	1	4
13	4	2	0	10	3
14	1	0	0	1	0
15	4	2	1	2	2
16	2	4	0	2	1
17	5	2	3	6	4
18	2	1	0	5	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>35</b>

## 5. Validity and Discussion

### 5.1 Validity

Since this study is a form of qualitative content analysis, reliability is controlled by the author. However, it is important to discuss the issue of validity in order to strengthen the integrity of the study. Because it is a qualitative study, the thoroughness of validity is judged in a rather different

way than that of quantitative validity, as articulated by [54]. They propose four criteria of qualitative validity, which are credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability.

### *5.1.1 Credibility*

[54] explain that the credibility criterion refers to determining that the results of qualitative research are believable from the perspective of the author in the research. Since from this perspective, the purpose of qualitative research is to describe or understand the phenomena of the post 9/11 decade from the author's interpretations, hence, the author is the only person who can legitimately judge the credibility of the results. The author judges the credibility of the study by cross referencing and reviewing extensive amounts of previous literature and articles that can reinforce the study's integrity. As an example, the author has found from reading past research by [3], specifically, that the discourse of Terrorism and Fear are the fundamental themes that gained wide coverage in the media after the events of 9/11. The findings of past research are consequently in line with the study's aims and outcomes. Furthermore, the author has systematically followed the protocol for media content analysis set out by [53] in order to appropriately determine and analyse the findings of the study. The methodology of this study is credible because the author has adapted the protocols obtained from past studies regarding the discourse of media content post 9/11. Therefore, since the aims and findings of the study match each other, combined with comparable findings in past literature and articles, the author judges that this study is credible.

### *5.1.2 Transferability*

Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings [54]. The key is to provide a thorough description of the study context and the statements that were central to the study. In this study, the author has explained the main ideas of the topic and has analysed the results of the



study in depth. [54] also imply that the person who wishes to ‘transfer’ the results to a different context judges the sensibility of the transfer, and therefore the author is deemed responsible for it. The results of this study complement [53] research on the discourse of Terrorism and Fear as media agenda after the 9/11 attacks. This study, therefore, follows the methodology and protocols of the aforementioned studies modified to suit the topic of the study. The author has generalized the results for different sections of *Al Jazeera* online news regarding 9/11, such as Opinions and Features through the same methodological approach, and it has been shown that the use of Terrorism Alertness and Fear are prominently used in these sections, hence the transferability of this study is supported. However, the results have not been transferred to wider settings, such as other news media outside *Al Jazeera*. This is due to the limitation imposed by time constraints, which limited any attempt to transfer the results to a broader context.

### *5.1.3 Dependability*

Dependability of the study highlights the need to account for the ever-changing context within which the study occurs [54]. The author is accountable for describing the changes that occur in the setting and how these changes affected the way the author approached the study. At the initial stage of the study, the author merely outlined the basic idea of the topic of study, which involved the application of media agenda-setting theory, and the warfare between war journalism and peace journalism. The concepts were found to be too general and ill-suited to the study of warfare. Therefore, during the process of conducting the study the application of the theory was refined into second-level agenda-setting. Moreover, in order to adapt to the field of study, another warfare element was added to the study, which is the fourth generation warfare, to relate to the study’s discussion. In carrying out the study, changes were minor and within the control of the author. For example, there were a few changes during data collection in terms of analysing and justifying the difference between Fear and Hope themes: Fear can appear to be Hope. However, the problem was settled when the both

terms were defined and Fear was shown to have negative value, whereas Hope conjures a positive tone. Furthermore, changes occurred in terms of the definition of the Terrorism Alertness theme. Initially, Terrorism Alertness was defined with a narrower scope whereby it refers to the actions taken for security measures, such as in airports in order to prevent terrorism. However, the author has broadened the scope of the theme by adding other criteria in defining Terrorism Alertness during data collection and analysis. Terrorism Alertness varies in the sense that it also refers to terrorism awareness, which includes contents that describe terrorism activities, terrorists' profiles, and the issues of importance and implications of terrorism activities. This addition is due to the study's aim to highlight the issue of awareness, and also to assist the author to critically discuss the narrative of terrorism as a theme in media discourse.

#### *5.1.4 Conformability*

In qualitative research, the author is assumed to bring a unique perspective to the study. According to [54], conformability refers to the level where the results could be confirmed or upheld by others. In this study, the author has documented the protocols for checking and rechecking the data throughout the study. Contradictory results or guidelines that are unclear or redundant are adjusted and refined in relevance to the study. For example, one of the elements found in the original draft of the protocol for studying media content analysis is to describe the headlines of the articles. This element is unnecessary because the author believes that this study is not conducted under media-framing theory, and thus the protocol is refined to avoid misleading results and context-related confusion during data analysis. In addition, throughout the study the author practiced a balanced and impartial outlook. Hence, in order to prevent potential for bias or distortion, judgments were made by the author by re-examining the protocols and procedures in data collection and analysis. Nevertheless, in the author's view, it was not difficult to avoid bias in the analyses because most of the articles analysed were written in a balanced and independent style.

## *5.2 Discussion*

### *5.2.1 Terrorism Alertness*

From the analysis, it is shown that the Terrorism Alertness theme is frequently used in the topic category of post 9/11 decade articles in Al Jazeera online with 44 instances of use in the 18 articles. The finding of this study agrees with past findings by [3], in which terrorism is associated with the general content of anything to with 9/11, even years after the attacks.

The use of Terrorism Alertness theme is portrayed through describing the profiles of terrorists and their activities. Al Qaeda and Osama bin Laden are frequently mentioned in these articles by describing their activities during the attacks, and their threats against secularism. In addition, the names of a few other terrorists have been dropped in these articles, linking them to further attacks around the globe following 9/11. The rationale of selecting this context as a criterion for Terrorism Alertness is due to the extent of media knowledge in describing terrorism and the depth to which it is portrayed. In addition, as described in Article 4, children are also seen as playing a role in being alert about terrorists. This touches on the question of which audience the media is targetting to set their agenda. Even though children never experienced, nor at most, remembered the terror of 9/11, the media still wants children to be involved in knowledge of its importance.

Casting terrorism as an illness of the world has not only extended the definition of its activities, but also raises the notion of relating the term to victims and victimization. The context of Terrorism Alertness in this study covers the events and implications of the terrorists attacks of 9/11, as well as those after; for example the 2002 Bali bombings, the 2004 Madrid bombings, the 2005 London bombings, and the most recent 2008 Mumbai bombings. The terrorism narrative embedded in these articles describes the human dimension, especially the suffering of those who have been attacked or affected by terrorism activities.

The Terrorism Alertness theme is also used to describe the intensification of security measures in international airports. Rituals of control resulting from 9/11 attacks mean that more lives are subjected to closer scrutiny. This leads

to the societal context of the finding, whereby social control and security efforts rely on the willingness of the controlled to participate. Strict security measures in airports after 9/11 suggests that society has become somewhat submissive and passive towards it, even the most uncomfortable aspects of it, in order to be protected from terrorists.

One of the most interesting findings in this study is that although the setting of the articles revolves around the terrorist attacks of 9/11, only a few articles actually mentioned 9/11. Other articles cover terrorist attacks after the 9/11 events as well as the implications of those attacks. It is suggested that the articles collectively portray 9/11 as a point of reference for subsequent terrorist attacks, thus implying the importance of 9/11 by association with terrorism in general.

Therefore, it can be said that terrorism discourse can be referred to as a general worldview. According to [3], the terrorism story is still told by us, and ever since 9/11 the media has focused more on terrorism, disaster, and the impending tragedy that awaits society. Terrorism defines reality, and audiences are reminded of the importance of the issue through repetitive media coverage.

### *5.2.2 Fear*

As anticipated in the first research question, the Fear theme is frequently used in the affective attribute category of post 9/11 decade articles in Al Jazeera online. The finding of this study is similar to past research results such as those of [7][3].

The context in which the Fear theme is used in the articles varies. Most articles cover fear to describe the terror, the suffering, and the loss of witnesses and survivors of terrorist attacks. Several articles illustrate the emotional appeal of the accounts of terrorism events by describing the scenarios and settings articulately and in detail. Another interesting finding is that one of the articles gives voice to the unsung heroes of 9/11. For example, in Article 10, a contractor clearing the remains of the twin towers is interviewed and the contents show that the interview expresses fear for health and abandonment. Victims are the consequences of fear as well as the discourse of fear. There

can be no fear without victims, and victims are seen as a representative or a status that not only includes people who have directly suffered personal, social, or physical calamity but also, by implication, all people living in a symbolic environment engendered by the discourse of fear. Pertaining to that, Fear is also embedded in the articles in expressing concerns of people who are indirectly involved in the attacks of 9/11, such as journalists and analysts.

While Fear is used as a psychological implication for witnesses and survivors of 9/11 and other terrorist attacks, it is important to note that Fear is also used to spread concern over new security measures and foreign policies involving the War on Terror. Article 2 richly highlights how security measures in international airports affect civil rights. Civilians are subjected to what is perceived to be highly intimate conduct of security measures such as pat downs, physical ‘wandings’, and the opening up baggage for inspection of personal belongings in front of many other people. Fear is interpreted as an element of irony, whereby in the name of security, people’s privacy is being exploited.

In addition, Fear is used to illustrate the question of ‘what will happen?’ and the subsequent alarming notion of ‘it is just a matter of time before it will happen’. It is suggested that this is a use of skilful propaganda in which the media heightens the attention of audiences to be in the know of threats and the importance of being engaged with the issue of 9/11. For example, Article 1 suggests that threats still remain in the United States, although far-reaching initiatives have been taken. The article states that there will be more threats to come even if intelligence procedures have been improved. Furthermore, in explaining the profiles of terrorists, Article 13 provides the element of fear by implying that anyone on the streets can be a potential terrorist. Therefore, in this study, Fear is generally articulated in a subliminal manner.

Fear is also used as a theme to express anxieties towards governments’ decisions after the attacks of 9/11. Articles 5, 6, and 11 for example, reveal the absurdity of the Bush Administration in justifying the Iraq War. Two articles centralize sceptics’ points of view on the events of 9/11. Fear is associated with these issues because of the concern of being lied to by the authorities who control society and whose decisions affect the daily lives of audiences.

The context of Fear in the articles analysed varies from concerns for security measures to implications of threats. Nevertheless, the core of Fear covered in these articles is based on fear of terrorism-related issues.

### *5.2.3 Fear Supports Terrorism as a Condition*

The event of 9/11 has changed the media. The expansion of fear and the blending of terrorism with the help of technology have coloured media messages about the importance of issues and events. It is suggested that terrorism is supported by fear and the relationship between them can implicate society. Terrorism has joined crime as a master narrative of fear that contains many justifications and disclaimers for all types of behaviour.

The social construction of terrorism is manipulated by fear. Previous domestic and international events, specifically well-established cultural narratives revolving around fear and its justification, as well as the placement of fear in the interpretations of society have constructed the meanings of the 9/11 attacks. Although fear has been associated with crime and deviance, an alternative enemy emerged after 9/11, which is terrorism. [3] has cited a few words from President Bush's speech in the media, in which the latter initially referred to the attackers of 9/11 as 'those folks' then to 'evil ones'; and the hijackings as a 'terrorist attack' to 'an act of war'. Hence, the use of these terms helps the media to simplify the definitions and main ideas of the narrative relating to 9/11 which, as a result, affects the hearts and minds of the society. Recall the role of the media prior to the invasion of Iraq as an example.

As mentioned earlier, the American media repeatedly made claims about terrorism and Iraq's connection with 9/11. [30] pointed out that in that time of crisis the media caused more heat than light, more anger and spectacle than understanding, and more extreme partisanship towards the Bush Administration, rather than contributing to a democratic debate on how the country should confront terrorism.

#### *5.2.4 Terrorism, Fear, and Moral Panic*

Moral panic in the media is a part of social control and fear narrative. As mentioned, terrorism and fear can be associated with moral panic. Nevertheless, [3] finds that terrorism is not associated with moral panic in the mainstream media, but the situation is different in the alternative media. For example, more than 17,000 media sites have associated terrorism with moral panic, which includes academic book advertisements, conference presentations, and blogs. A professor has said:

The terrorism scare is a moral panic, similar to many throughout recent history. Social scientists call these society-wise scares MPs [moral panics] because they are founded upon for fear of threats to society from moral deviants of the worst kind. In general, MPs begin when events occur that cause a great many people to feel threatened by an internal enemy, hidden deep within their society. Secret groups of foreign terrorists, believed to be fanatics who kill without guilt, fit the bill perfectly [55].

Thus it is clear that terrorism and fear is associated with moral panic. Although moral panic is often linked with societal problems such as drugs, sex, and deviance, the very definition of moral panic can also be applied to terrorism because it triggers fear towards society in general.

In addition, [3] also studied the use of moral panic in the media and found that it has been frequently used in newspaper formats such as editorials and op-eds after the 9/11 attacks.

Therefore, pertaining to this study, the use of Terrorism Alertness is prominent and it is suggested that online news media (Al Jazeera online) is subliminally persuading its audiences to regard terrorism as a moral panic-related topic that is important for society.

#### *5.3 Second Level Agenda-Setting Theory*

The study concludes that the terrorism story is still being told by the media as an important topic embedded in the context of 9/11, more than a decade after the attacks. The first dimension of the second level agenda-setting theory, which is the topic of the unit of analysis, is justified in this

study since Terrorism Alertness was present as a main topic 44 times in the articles analysed regarding 9/11 post decade. The Political Allegiance theme was the second most frequent topic, occurring 30 times, mainly describing the complex relationships between the United States and other nations in supporting the War on Terror. The general idea found in this theme is concern for the economic and social implications of nations that supported the War on Terror, mainly Pakistan and Britain. This leads to the least mentioned topic, which is the Justification of Iraq War, which was the topic only 17 times. The context of this theme highlights the absurdity of the war's justification by President Bush, as well as the public support for the war, which are inter-related. Although the contents of these articles collectively weigh more towards criticism, they are still balanced and independently constructed by Al Jazeera's journalists. In relating to social construct, it is yet to be shown that these topics are of significance to the public because consideration of public opinion has not yet been incorporated.

The second dimension of the theory used in this study is the affective attributes dimension. The results show that in this dimension, Fear is used most frequently (64 times collectively) in the articles, followed by Hope (35 times). Therefore, the articles lean more towards pessimism in regards to 9/11. Fear is repetitively covered in all articles, while Hope is covered in only a few. With reference to the topic dimension, this dimension of the second level agenda-setting theory suggests that the emotional appeal of the stories told is more prominent and evident in spreading the importance of 9/11. Fear leads to social construction in the sense of people being always alert and armoured against threats that might befall them.

Although the presentation and cognitive attributes dimensions are not studied as the core elements to determine themes for this study, nevertheless their relations with the findings of the study can be discussed.

In terms of the cognitive attributes dimension, it is interesting to look at the main attribute of the overall unit of analysis – accessibility. When we talk about online news, it is logical that all news is accessible. The main purpose of agenda-setting theory is that it highlights issues in order to spread their importance to the audience. Al Jazeera, being a well-known news organization,



plays a role in applying agenda-setting theory at its best, by highlighting the importance of remembering 9/11 after 10 years through the most accessible and reachable means; that is, its official website.

#### *5.4 Fourth generation warfare*

Relating the study to fourth generation warfare lies beyond the surface. Retired Marine Colonel T. X. Hammes has outlined an innovative construct for further understanding the evolution of warfare, in which he personifies the contradictory idea of recent warfare of ‘weak against strong’ [55]. He contends that fourth generation warfare ‘uses all available networks--political, economic, social, and military--to convince the enemy’s political decision makers that their strategic goals are either unachievable or too costly for the perceived benefit. It is an evolved form of insurgency’ [55]. In addition, the target of the enemy in fourth generation warfare is not the adversary’s armed forces or tactical formations, but the political establishment and the policy makers of the enemy’s adversary through putting them into intense pressure that makes them gradually submit, and it is disconnected from military success or failure on the physical battlefield [56].

As this is a discussion of warfare, it is logical to look at both sides of the coin. The first example of the tactical approach of fourth generation warfare comes from the Jihadi group’s side, in which the Internet was used to wage a campaign to win the ‘hearts and minds’ of media audiences. This group spreads its message via the Internet, and the packaging of their message has transformed according to their target audiences. From depicted themselves as soldiers and being filmed holding weapons in outdoor locations, the more recent footage portrays Al Qaeda’s leaders in a domestic or office environment, with bookshelves loaded with religious texts, and more importantly, they have even taken at times to quoting Western authors and famous speeches [57]. This packaging is interpreted as conveying the impression that, while the jihadi is still committed to the cause, he is at the same time a scholar who is highly intellectual and not cut off from the outside world. [58] believes that they are also motivated to know and understand their enemy’s culture, something that may attract audiences who lean against Western interests.

However, [59] states that only a small minority has used street demonstrations to advocate jihad as the answer to all problems, particularly against Western cultural hegemony on liberalism and secularism. This is interesting because it touches specifically on physical grounds, but not on the mentioned online setting. Nevertheless, small groups can infiltrate and influence the masses into joining their cause as the concept of fourth generation warfare explains that it is initiated by groups and non state actors in order to pursue a certain ideology.

Besides terrorism, other elements of modern fourth generation warfare include high technology, a trans-national or non-national base of operations, precise targeting of the enemy's culture and cultural symbols, and the utilization through media manipulation of sophisticated psychological warfare operations. Judging 9/11 after a decade, [60] indicates conspiracy theories claiming that the attacks were planned by the United States and Israel, that the death toll was too small compared to such great attacks, and that Osama's confession was staged. She rationalizes that 'Islamic terrorists' have never benefitted if they were the ones planning the attacks, and argues that the attacks were planned by the Westerners in order to expand Islamophobic sentiments around the globe. The articles analysed in this study also agree with such a statement, in which scepticism revolves around the events of 9/11.

Thus, the core tactical aim for fourth generation warfare is based on the war of ideas and information. Those ideas and information must be familiar and attractive to their target audience, as described previously on Al Qaeda's footage. Plus, accessibility and intelligibility of the information, cultural identity and history, and credibility of the information source, have become important factors in disseminating messages [58].

This leads to the other side of the coin, which concerns the results of the study. Fourth generation warfare, as explained by Simons (2010), arises when the war that is claimed to be on the grounds of spirituality and righteousness rather than the practice of direct military force is waged through the emphasis of differences between opposing actors. Thus, in this type of warfare, the word is every bit as powerful, if not more so, than the sword [58]. This is where

the media plays a role. In relating to the discourse of Terrorism Alertness and Fear, fourth generation warfare takes its toll as an advantage for terrorists in studying the norms of social construction regarding issues and events. The spread of media content messages furnishes the strategic notion of the fourth generation warfare to the enemy's advantage.

Nevertheless, since terrorism is an element of this type of warfare, the discourse of fear towards potential threats can either assist policy makers or terrorists themselves in winning the audiences' hearts and minds. In defence of the media regarding 9/11, the public discourse of Terrorism Alertness and Fear is significant in raising the audiences' awareness regarding the issue of terrorism. Media content messages, with the help of policy makers, can help governments in winning the war of ideas that is initially triggered by terrorists, via fourth generation warfare strategies. The media can be seen as one of the significant 'battlefields' of fourth generation warfare to win the hearts and minds of their audiences and thus create a useful social construct in battling against terrorism.

Through careful planning, restriction, and control of images, the media can manage terrorism and social reality. There was war before terrorism became so closely linked with the discourse of fear, in which the pervasive communication, symbolic awareness, and expectation that danger and risk are main features of the symbolic environment. However, the terrorism war is predicated on the grounds of a limitless attraction to identifying and validating sources of fear with the warrant to attack them [3]. In spite of its rationale with asymmetrical warfare, the War on Terror triggers the idea that it is about the war of the most military powerful, of the hegemonic state. More than 10 years have past and we can see that the War on Terror has result in more death and destruction than the acts of vengeance by terrorists. However, it is merely on physical grounds. The main concern of the fourth generation warfare is the extent to which the ideology affects the hearts and minds of the people.

In short, fourth generation warfare is a complex form of warfare, whose consequences are not always in plain sight. However, in this period of time, [58] believes that the insurgents or terrorists are ahead in winning the war

on the grounds that they are ahead in adapting their operations to this type of warfare. Furthermore, the coalition forces are still practicing third generation warfare through airstrikes, and these can result in reinforcing support towards insurgents. Therefore, the in depth understanding of how communication, symbolism, and perception are conducted across cultures is important to elevate the chances of winning the fourth generation war. Through media content analysis, the realization of how 9/11 is used can help authorities as well as media audiences in shaping an intellectually equipped social construct.

### *5.5 War Journalism vs. Peace Journalism*

The rise of *Al Jazeera* and other online news media sites has changed how conflict is being covered. Although the broadcasting of *Al Jazeera* news has been banned in most parts of the United States, *Al Jazeera's* online website has reached even the most formidable audiences. In addition, [51] explains that *Al Jazeera* has utilized Internet technology to distribute the gathered information regarding wars in Iraq and Gaza.

Spreading the idea of victimization and associating it with terrorism, as mentioned earlier, has promoted fear and engages the compliance of government directives. However, alternative media can also contradict this statement, as [3] finds that numerous claims and conspiracies regarding the 9/11 attacks have led the latter media to disseminate the 'truth' behind the attacks. This is further supported through articles analysed in the present study which express scepticism towards the events of 9/11. The articles argue that 9/11 was merely a front to justify the United States government agendas, and that fear is spread to gain public support.

As previously mentioned, [27] theorizes that the general pictorial coverage of US wars by its media does not illustrate the authenticities of war. This is because media are a product that is bought, sold, or dispensed with, that news content is socially constructed through production formats to be 'interesting' and 'entertaining' [3]. The terrorism narratives in war journalism describe terrorists as uncivilized in conducting warfare and, since terrorism is not justified, 'innocent' civilian are targeted; then in any circumstances, the

pursuit of fighting terrorism will lead to torture, kidnapping, and widespread killing of civilians [61].

Furthermore, [26] cites Jill Abramson, an executive editor for the New York Times in which the latter suggests that the failure to capture Osama bin Laden was because of a dangerous trend in Pakistan in which there was more hatred towards America rather than love for Osama. This is where the theme Political Allegiance plays a part. In the articles analysed in this study, Pakistan is viewed as having conflicting relationship with the United States in the pursuit of war against terrorism. In relation to journalism warfare, Political Allegiance covers a much broader area, which includes not only the relationship between different nations, but also the hidden elements below the surface – the relationship between policy makers and the media in spreading ideas and concepts of conflict-inciting issues.

[3] explains that there are conventions for defining and covering newsworthy events. Mass media prefer to highlight the goodness, the suffering, and the injustice of their ‘side’ while ignoring the other side of the story. The ‘War on Terror’ has led to the sidelining of other ‘wars’ that are important and very much fought for by the global community in the 21st century, such as global poverty and global illiteracy [29]. The theme Justification of Iraq War fits in here. The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are justified in the name of the War on Terror. Media systematically avoid coverage of the death and sufferings of the enemy which, as a result, reinforces the sentiments and stereotyping of the opposition. However, it is important to note that shoring up propaganda in the media is challenging when opposing and particularly ‘humanizing’ information follows.

The definition of peace journalism implies that its existence is to reduce the bias towards violence against its counterpart, war journalism. Logically, peace journalism promotes peace and hope among audiences that social change is needed and ‘things will get better eventually’. However, pertaining to the articles analysed in the present study, the Hope theme is the least frequently covered, collectively only 17 times. Hope is only covered to describe the desire that terrorism and fear will not interfere with daily lives, in which ironically, the latter proves to be more prominent and greater in

context. This leads to the question of *Al Jazeera's* values, in which the BBC-trained editor-in-chief Ahmad al-Sheikh states that the real point of Al Jazeera is to be in touch with human beings at all times, apart from being accurate, factual, and timely [62]. However, covering such emotionally driven stories can also incite the build-up of conflicts.

Since 9/11, the focus of 'human being' has changed in the mass media, which can be seen in the coverage of War on Terror against al Qaeda or Iraq. According to [3], there is little institutionalized space for the story of enemies' suffering or casualties. Al Qaeda communicates through web media, while the United States controls the Iraqi media, but not *Al Jazeera*. The Iraqi media tended to support the war against terrorism; however an exception was when the Iraqi government took a strict position regarding the Abu Ghraib prison torture, as well as other instances where the United States used excessive force and murdered civilians [63]. In several news media outlets such as The New York Times, CNN, and NBC news reports on United Nations' voice for the suffering and inhumane treatment during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were strongly covered. Therefore, the 'human interest' in peace journalism features the suffering and killing of civilians.

From a different angle, another interesting finding from the analysis of the set of the 18 articles is the lack of an Islamic-related context. Since scholars often associate terrorism and its spread with Islam [14, 25, 26, 29, 37, 36], it is perhaps strange that not even once has the link between terrorism and Islam been highlighted in the articles. Pertaining to the results of the study, in which Terrorism Alertness is the most prominent discourse in the topic category, it could be expected that *Al Jazeera*, which acclaims to be a channel that provides balance and multi-level perspectives [9], would touch on the justification of the relationship between terrorism and Islam. However, this may be due to the idea of *Al Jazeera's* journalistic values, which are slanted more towards the humanistic approach rather than the balance of different perspectives in regards to terrorism and Islam.

Nevertheless, to the absence of an Islamic perspective leads to questions about *Al Jazeera's* role in the media world. Again, by relating with the findings of the study, the prominent discourse of Terrorism Alertness and Fear by *Al*

*Jazeera* equates to other US-based media organizations, as studied by [7, 3]. In other words, *Al Jazeera* is no different from other US-biased media in of the contents it spreads post 9/11. In addition, [9] found that the majority of news shown on the *Al-Jazeera* network was sourced from the US and its allies and that its online website covered negative perceptions toward terrorism, with a lack of different perspectives regarding the matter. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, [51] affirm that *Al Jazeera* plays a role in driving public opinion towards Americans due to its negative coverage of the United States, characterizing it as a 'powerful and uniform media effect'.

The bottom line is, the battle between war and peace journalism is ambiguous. War journalism regarding the wars related to War on Terror covers as much violence as peace journalism, though in different context. War journalism provides audiences with much definitive and physical violence related contents, while peace journalism spreads the affective attributes of heightened fear and less hope.

### *5.6 Implications of the Spread of Terrorism Alertness and Fear*

Fear and terrorism are experienced and known by media audiences. What fear can be expanded to is the central concern of this section, in which fear is no longer mentioned in the articles, but implied subliminally towards audiences. This study finds that Terrorism Alertness and Fear are naturally associated with one another, and that the discourse of these two prominent themes implicates societal constructs in a way that realizes the need for media content awareness, recognition of information warfare, refinements in the application of the term of moral panic, and the significance of the media and policy makers in shaping public perceptions and constructs of 9/11.

[64] states that fear and anxiety towards the War on Terror affects national security, and therefore suggests that communication is recommended to ensure national security is achieved. [65] addresses the fact that the US military relies heavily on Internet and communication networks; hence requirements for national security, surveillance, propaganda, and cyber warfare are met by retooling cyberspace. The journal also believes that US propaganda campaigns targeting foreign audiences have been countered due to the information flow

in global media. Therefore, in explaining contradictory information regarding the War on Terror, implication applies to information warfare. [66] suggests that information warfare should be regarded as subjects and objects of power and knowledge. In short, public awareness is significant in ensuring a secure society.

In the context of Islamic terrorism, [67] defined principles to improve US's security by winning the war on ideas, and initiatives taken to mend American and Muslim relations, and according to [68], US policies regarding business and one-dimensional power need to be changed. In addition to that, [69] criticizes America's public diplomacy as underdeveloped and argues that the US faces challenges in addressing credibility and misperceptions in the Middle East. [70] believes that the abuse of power in the repressive legislation, illegal counter-terrorism measures and arming of 'allies' affects the security and livelihood of citizens. These articles suggest that actions regarding security, the war on ideas, and policies are factors contributing to how the War on Terror is portrayed and perceived.

The main problem statement of this study concerns the awareness of media audiences about how the media continues to set the agenda for 9/11 after a decade. In the authors' view, the spread of terrorism and fear can be associated with moral panic. This is because social meanings are constructed through repetitive use of words in news discourse associated with certain issues and events. Moral panic prevails in the context of terrorism, because in this context, terrorism is the 'opposition' that leads to the social meaning of fear. The major impact of the discourse of terrorism and fear is the belief that 'things are out of control' and that social life has become more violent when social actors define their situations as 'fearful'. Media audiences therefore collectively share the identity of 'fear realists' when all walks of lives socially construct their effective environments with fear.

In the local setting, after the attacks of 9/11, The Home Ministry of Malaysia highlighted the importance of cutting terrorism financing through monitoring and restricting the source of terrorism financing, with collaboration between financial regulators and security agencies [71]. Malaysia has also emphasized the educational role in rooting the causes of terrorism, extremism,



and militancy in order to tackle the issues. The Malaysian government is against all forms of extremism, because it is against Islamic faith. The Foreign Ministry of Malaysia believes that education is important to overcome ignorance and backwardness, and that efforts should be taken to improve conflicts and repression that contribute to terrorism. He also believes that Malaysia will continue to monitor and take decisive actions against extremism through tolerance and moderation based on the Islamic faith. Therefore, it can be concluded that Malaysia has realized the need to be aware of the significance of terrorism and fear after the events of 9/11.

### *5.7 Opportunities and Challenges*

[33] state that *Al Jazeera* English represents a fresh style in structure and content, and it provides a significant test case for existing research in regards to transnational media organizations and media and conflict scholarship more broadly. The fourth estate has obviously advanced by adapting to technology such as the Internet. Online news media such as *Al Jazeera* online, with its independent values, have the advantage of creating awareness of the discourse of terrorism and fear in order to educate audiences.

The findings indicate that the media uses Terrorism Alertness and Fear as the main elements in spreading the significance of the issue of 9/11, in the decade following the attacks. Opportunities arise in terms of the relationship between policy makers and the media. Propaganda research shows that policy makers, who serve as the major source of news, can shape the perceptions of mass media audiences and promote acceptance of state control measures [72-74]. Government officials, for example, have provided the need for public information regarding security measures. As a dominant source of news, policy makers are significant actors in defining issues and setting political agendas.

Moreover, from a different perspective, the findings of the study raise further thoughts relating to the study of unconventional warfare. As previously discussed, fourth generation warfare regarding terrorism and fear can be further analysed in a more media-focused setting. The discourse of terrorism and fear post 9/11 helps in refining the values of peace journalism.

In addition to opportunities, challenges are also apparent. Online media implications, for example, have led to more frequent exposure of fear among audiences due to the accessibility and swift updates on such media. Different journalistic values also pose a challenge in spreading awareness of media content regarding terrorism and fear. Some media organizations are tend to be biased towards causes, groups, or governments that are partial towards the spread of fear for social control. In addition, news decisions are becoming more centralized and thus journalism is cheapened [3]. The rise of online media that recirculates mainstream news media has also watered down the work of conventional journalists and reduces the number of professional journalists.

Furthermore, policies that constrain awareness of the discourse of terrorism and fear and that may contradict certain organizations or government bodies' propaganda on the issue can be presented as a threat to freedom and liberalization of the press and society. Then there is an also economic challenge within the fourth estate, in that the media needs to 'sell' stories or ideas that can create an emotional appeal towards a current topic and maintain its eminence among the audiences. The mass media and journalism is subjected to the economic and risk assessment rationality that affects and directs so much in social life. This also relates to the psychological aspect of society, in which media audiences have adapted to the nature of media content and narratives regarding 9/11. Therefore, the ultimate challenge is to convince these media-loving audiences to accept the idea that the media is manipulating their hearts and minds.

## **6.0 Conclusion**

Being aware of media content is important because an audience can detect the agenda behind news organizations and their interests behind the news that are covered. More importantly, such awareness helps audiences to realize the reasons behind the changes in the social construct. In the case of the post 9/11 period, terrorism is among the many themes that are spread in the media, as well as the spread of fear among the audience. The greatest effect of terrorism and fear in the media is that 9/11 has been associated

with many ‘threatening’, significant matters. The repetitive discourse of terrorism and fear propaganda in the media can lead to moral panic as well as having other social implications. Therefore, in the present study, the use of second level agenda-setting is significant in specifically investigating the topic and the affective attributes of 18 articles in *Al Jazeera* online English Correspondents’ Report section.

The study was conducted through qualitative media content analysis, in which protocols were followed to categorize, analyse, and interpret the study’s data and findings. The study strictly follows a constructivist view, and therefore the findings of this study are highly subjective and transactional, dependent on the researcher’s interpretations.

The results show that in the context of the post 9/11 decade content in *Al Jazeera* online (English) Correspondents’ Reports section, Terrorism Alertness is the most frequently covered theme according to topic, with 44 occurrences collectively, and spread of Fear is the most frequently covered affective theme with 64 occurrences collectively, in all 18 articles. These results are compatible with [3] research on the discourse of terrorism and fear in the media after 9/11. Hence, the results can be said to be comparable with previous studies regarding media content post 9/11.

Therefore, the research objectives are achieved, and the aims of the study have been met. 9/11 terrorism has been used by the media to promote fear related agendas and ideologies. The discussion indicates that in the context of media and information warfare, the results can be associated with fourth generation warfare. There are implications for various parties, as well as opportunities and challenges arising from the findings of this study. The problem can be solved if there is a mutual relationship between the media and policy makers in the pursuit of enhancing society’s intellectual development of issues within the context of 9/11. Nevertheless, the discussion on the outcomes of this study suggests that further and more extensive research on the topic is necessary to complement the research to date.

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